

## **A History of the Known Worlds**

This is the account of human history over the last five hundred years, little is known of the time before that other than the point at which this account begins, and that is with the second republic.

The second republic was the pinnacle of human achievement, it stretched across hundreds of star-systems, and it used and created technology far beyond anything you or I could possibly conceive. And as the famous parable says, technology was its eventual downfall. Little is known of the exact details of how the fall came about, but common belief is that the rulers of the republic lost sight of the holy flame, and more they sought to understand and even recreate it. In their arrogance they did not hear the warnings from the Pancreator, and they failed to see their last chance as it slipped past unnoticed amid torrents of invention and discovery.

And so it was that the Pancreator's wrath came down upon them. The universe was connected together through a central thinking machine, this machine was the real republic, it told people when to be paid, and kept the economy running efficiently, it told technicians how to repair machines, in short it told the people how to live, and repressed their need for the Pancreator's holy flame in their hearts. When this machine ceased to work, the republic collapsed. The technicians could no longer repair the machines, the economy was left without its fulcrum and collapsed, and the people were not paid, digital wealth ceased to be, people once proud and rich were left poverty stricken and unable to even feed their families. While the loss of control over food distribution and production drove prices ever higher, most of the populace had no money and no means of earning any. The majority of jobs involved clerical and administration work, and all used the central core in some way, they were all now useless and unemployed, their savings lost in the crash.

And so the universe was in dire straights. First the people panicked, then they starved, then came riots, looting and a complete collapse of order. Eventually, when all was thought lost came the Noble houses. They offered the people a change in law, under the protection of a Noble a person could find employment, and earn a livable wage to feed their families with. The Law became simple, the Nobles wrote the laws and the people followed them. But, the Nobles were not infallible and so the church came as advisors and diplomats to aide the Nobles in their difficult task. Where once before in the second republic, the people's faith was wavering, now with the aide of the Nobles the faith of the people is once again strong.

## **Between the Lines**

One account of events is never enough, but that is the only account which survives to this day. The full story goes into great detail about the economic failings of the second republic. It seems to many scholars that the fall was imminent, the republic over expanded and its computer couldn't cope. Others however talk of darker things, treachery from within or without. None of these arguments can stand up to the folk lore to which the people adhere. And so the truth is still a mystery.

To describe the world as it now is I must first detail in a simple way the way the known worlds are. To do this you need to know a little of recent history. First came the Vuldrok, alien barbarians in human skin, they raped and pillaged their way across the galaxy. Then on the other side of the Known Worlds came the Kurgan, heretics from the outer worlds unexplored by decent folk. They ran rampant through the galaxy, but they were eventually defeated and driven back.

## **The League**

The League was formed recently, after the barbarian wars ended. They had for a long time simply been independent star-systems, linked only by the belief that they could between them reform the republic and restore order to the universe. A hopeless task?

In truth it was simple reality which defeated their aims, and sealed the final nails in the coffin of the old republic forever. As the fall was happening technicians lost the one tool they could not do without, the central core. This stored a complete database of all the republics technology and how to repair any fault, sometimes it is said technicians would replace parts before they actually failed, though this is just legend. When the fall came only a handful of technicians actually new how to repair the machines, the rest were either too inexperienced or lacked the knowledge to do any more than follow the instructions they received from the core.

On Liberty, all the scientists and designers and engineers were gathered together to begin work on the greatest chance the republic had to survive. Great tomes of ancient lore we now call the Repository of Knowledge. Originally these books were written with the aim to re-create the database on which the technicians of the second republic once survived. Though that database was never implemented, it may yet be or so the League maintain their hope. The books are useful, although the information they contain relates to specifics, i.e. If the plasma coolant is constantly overheating, replace it with new coolant. Over the last 500 years, the works are still undergoing writings, re-writings and additions, though now as the old masters are long dead these statements have become parables of

comparison from which to draw the solutions to other problems. It is from these beginnings that the Order of Pneumatic Engineers, now referred to as the Holy Order of Engineers, began. These priests joined with the church of the celestial sun, soon after it became apparent that they were using their faith in Pancreator and the Holy Flame in order to maintain and repair old machinery from the second republic. Exactly when and how this transition began is still a mystery, though they themselves know, but are too secretive to tell. What is known is that repairs to machines are normally done with a tech-priest present. Their servitors do the work, and form the parts, but only the priests have the knowledge of the machines, they are guided partly by the book and partly by their faith to find the cause of the troubles within machines.

It is rumored that the conjuncture between science and faith started when the scientists recruited the aide of the church as scribes to write and copy the books for them. This may even be true.

Life in the League is tough, they have maintained an out of date legal system based upon a thousand years of precedence, stemming from corruption and wealth. In a system where wealth is everything and few possess even enough to feed themselves, they have no justice. One of the few surviving legacies of the second republic, and a treasure to the League. The League revere the republic, to the extent that it itself has become something of a matter of faith. And this is where the Holy Order of Engineers hold sway, instead of reading from the gospels they used to read histories of the republic and old stories which only served to depress their people. They eventually saw their error and now read from the gospels, the result is a bizarre mixture of the Pancreator's teachings and republican attitude and tech worship.

Economically the League have only one thing, and that is the technology they maintain across the galaxy. Otherwise they own little in the way of food production facilities, most of the populace live on a synthetic substance akin to porridge. Though the few who are rich enjoy life as well as any Noble from off world would.

## **The Landsraad**

The Landsraad is comprised of the ten most powerful Noble houses, house Alecto most powerful of the ten had a Prince and he became the hero of the Known worlds. He united all houses and the league under a single banner, he drove back all the barbarian hordes and will soon take the throne, uniting the known worlds under one banner. Soon he will be known as Emperor Vladimir Alecto, I hope he brings us all peace. Recently house Alecto has adopted a fifth world into their fold, a distant star known as Nowhere. Life on an Alecto world is for the most part peaceful, the nobles from this house have maintained entertainments from the second republic, such as magic lantern

shows. Which they now sell freely across the known worlds. They also provide for their people like no other house does, uses for the homeless, and a competitive yet caring upbringing for all their children, no matter how old.

When describing the other houses it seems only fair to cover them in order of wealth and popularity. This would direct us first to house Justinian. This house has become inseparable with Alecto of late, whenever one is mentioned the other is always in the following sentence. They live on the outskirts of the jump web, where I am told that they maintain a peaceful existence. Their house is noted for its honor and fairness to all creatures. And their planets observe the order of nature, and harmony's as taught by the prophets disciple Amalthea. This has led them to create beautiful garden worlds, where all members of their house from the lowest servant to the highest Noble must spend part of their life tending and nurturing nature. If you think this makes them cowardly however you would be sorely mistaken, the recent barbarian wars have them hailed to a man as hero's almost the equal of Vladimir himself. It is said that if a Justinian stands at your side, he will stay with you until death.

Close to every ones heart when Nobles are considered has to be house Windsor. This house is the epiphany of all it is to be noble, even the lowliest farmer is known for his stiff upper lip and practical aloofness. They own a tiny portion of the universe compared to other houses, but they have great wealth and produce many starships and other star-faring materials for all the other houses.

Nowadays, when house Windsor is mentioned house Hawkwood is sure to follow. This house is rapidly becoming the military arm of house Windsor, and certainly seem to have all their best ships at their disposal. Producing no technology themselves after the great holy purge, they rely a great deal on the support of other houses. However they have as export, a commodity which is hard to find on the ship building worlds of Tethys and Bastille where house Windsor hold power. Food, house Hawkwood are the butt of many jibes because of the amount of food they produce. But, this commodity is not a volatile as technology, and is always safe from the realms of proscribed technology to which many people fall afoul of. They also have manpower to spare in abundance, in the wars Hawkwood troops would fill half of the battle fields while the rest of the known worlds made up the other half.

The Hazat, gained a great deal of acclaim in the wars, where they were not considered in the annals of history prior to that. They are a stern and warlike people, very different from the other heroic houses in the wars. They nevertheless held their own in every battle, rarely did reports of the defeat of the Hazat ever come to peoples ears. This has gained them a great deal of military renown, though in truth their house claimed fewer medals than any other house. This they claim is animosity stemming from house Alecto, their

neighbors. In spite of the lack of medals awarded them by the forming Imperium, battles at which the Hazat fought bravely are common stories. They are firmly planted in the minds of men for their great deeds.

A diametric opposite, house Gizar received little acclaim in the wars, but nevertheless contributed greatly. This is perhaps because house Gizar are not a house loved by its people, though Hazat serfs are forbidden to speak of their personal lives, house Gizar's instead openly mock and ridicule their leaders. Their home world of Neopolis is a dessert city, built of limestone into great pyramidal structures. Their people lead a harsh life, while their Nobles employ machines to manage the heavily irrigated fields of water and rice.

House Li-Halan, should come next the opposite of a popular house they are nevertheless very rich. For centuries their population suffered under gross abuse of human rights, as this house was infamously involved with a blasphemous cult revolving around death. This cult led this house into some very dark times, but thanks to the Pancreator's missionaries they have now found the Holy Flame and are now a part of the fold. Once decadence and sadistic tortures entertained the Nobles of this house, now they have found passion in gardening and peace. House Li-Halan still however stirs a deep set dread in the hearts of most of the decent folk of the universe.

The next house which must be discussed is the one most commonly forgotten in these times of war. Stereotypically this house is noted for its bland and understated exterior. Many distrust the Nobles of this house, claiming they are scheming and manipulative. The truth is they simply are not interesting enough to be manipulative. One rumor which does crop up time and again is that this houses elite are genetically engineered bankers and accountants. This is almost certainly untrue as genetic engineering, a heresy not studied since the republic, is a proscribed technology. And this house is most certainly not heretics. The best and really the only thing of interest with this house is that their economy has been a stable, yet rather complex affair. Most traders will not use their money even though it is actually the most valuable coinage in the known worlds, as they risk punishments of anti-patriotism or even treason (in the case of the Hazat territories). There is some practicality in that, as the coinage of house Van-Gelder creates wealth for its minters with each spending and recollection. Though to be perfectly honest I'm not sure what that means.

House Decados should be the next to be mentioned. This house has a reputation for being schemers, some say they are in league with the Vau who reside in their system. Though I am sure that is not the case. They have little resources, not even tech. They do have a decent method of managing control in the toughest sectors of the galaxy however. Areas of society such as prisons and the control of unruly yet violent people and even aliens are their specialty. So perhaps their purported brutality is simply exaggerated by

popular belief. This house then sells itself as police and warrant officers, to the worst areas of the galaxy. It has to be said however that to date, no Decados police state has relinquished control back to the world which hired it.

Last of the ten, replaces the once proud house Keddah. Also claiming Arabic decent house Al-Malik has actually bought two of Keddah's star-systems, after that house fell into financial difficulty. Oddly the Keddahns have moved to the far end of the jump web, preferring the lush green lands of Grail to the harsh lands of their origin. So Keddah is now classed as a minor house while house Al-Malik goes from strength to strength. This house is actually a merchant family who discovered its Noble heritage relatively recently, though before the blessed discovery of the Hazat as to their Noble lineage. Their merchant routes still show through however, and it is said that in the bazaars of their home world of Istakhr anything can be bought.

It should also be noted that the heretical house Masseri, once the central target of the Sathra wars, has found the Holy Flame too. Though they live far outside the reach of the Church of the Celestial Sun, rumors of the continued practice of that evil heresy are greatly exaggerated. House Masseri are a quite people and do not get involved in galactic affairs. Their pilots however are still some of the best around, and in the recent Barbarian wars many showed true faith in the Pancreator and though hundreds of their star fighter pilots died, the few who have survived the wars take back with them renewed hope that they will soon welcome the church of the celestial sun to build for them a cathedral to help guide their souls in the right direction.

### **The Phavian Institute**

This body governs psychics. The head quarters is located on Lemakainen. Akin to the Ur-Obun and house Thana they are classed as penitents, and therefore are acknowledged not as accursed psychics or daemons. But as useful tools in the Pancreator's works. They must wear gloves at all times, to prevent accidental abuses of privacy and a badge depicting their allegiance to the institute. Psychics however are all dangerous, contact with them should be kept to a minimum lest your immortal soul be at risk.